MARVEL'S INFINITY GAUNTLET

#94

COMICS CROSSOVER KING
GEORGE PÉREZ
RETURNS AT LONG LAST TO MARVEL

NEW (NOVEL, TOO)
PETER DAVID
ROCKETEER WRITER RAPS

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MIGHTY MARVEL IN MEXICO: NO ZOMBIES—AT LEAST NOT YET!

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COMICS INTERVIEW

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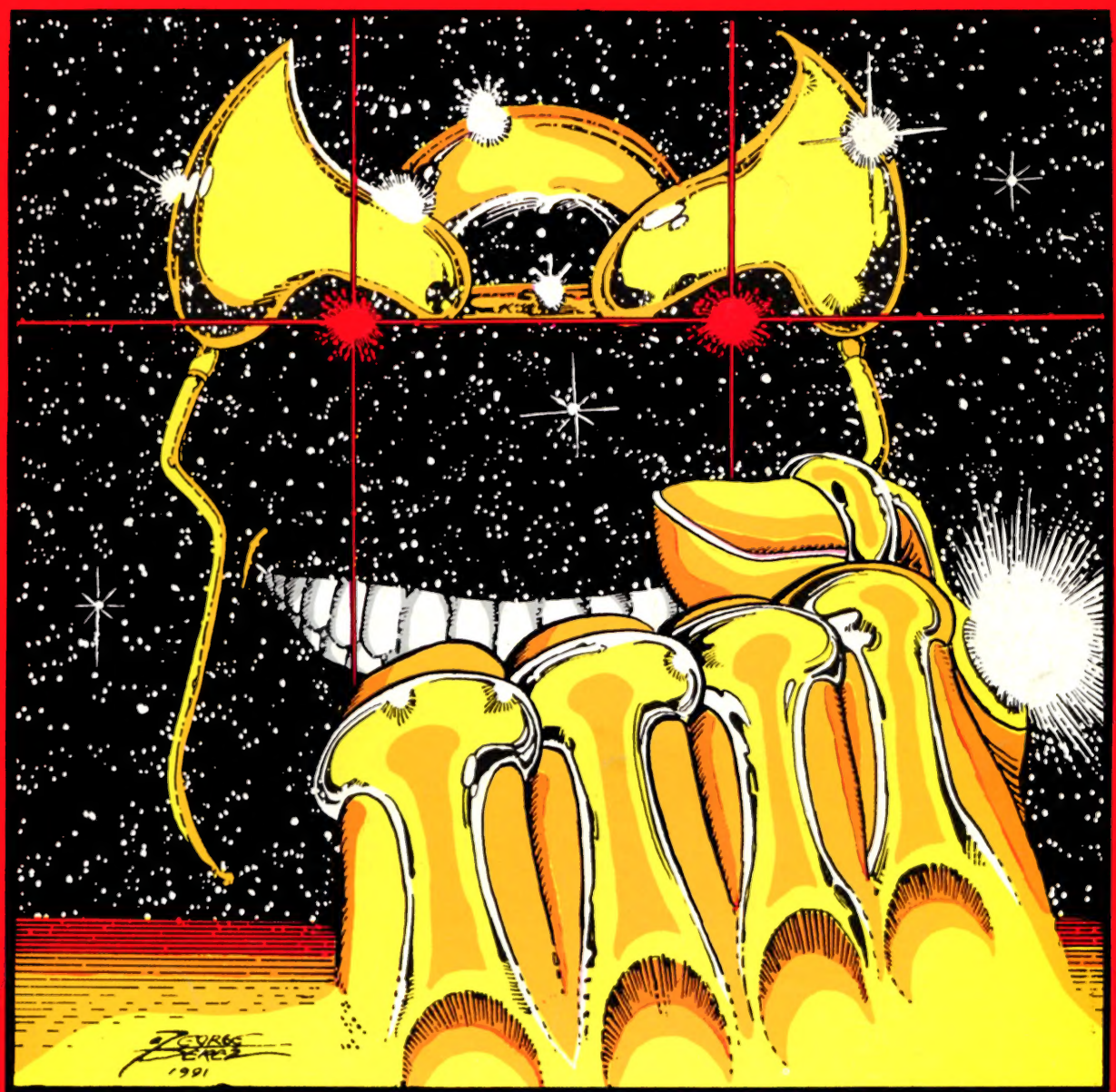

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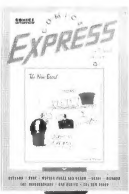

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UP FRONT

CI CAUGHT SOLICITING!!! (YOUR COMMENTS)

With each passing issue, the excitement grows — COMICS INTERVIEW #100 is coming!

Naturally, that puts your editor/publisher in a contemplative state of mind, looking back on past issues of COMICS INTERVIEW and ahead to the future of the magazine. You've helped make us one of the handful of comics publications that really count, and now I'm asking each and every one who enjoys and appreciates INTERVIEW for direct feedback. Here's your chance to be heard — loud and clear!

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With personal thanks,

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Publisher

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL:
UP FRONT
a rap with *dak*
3

ARTIST:
GEORGE PÉREZ
pat asks an *infinity* of questions that run the *gauntlet*
4

SPOTLIGHT:
THE ROCKETEER THE *OTHER* COMIC
in which *o'neill* finds out just how well *peter david* is adapting
18

ARTIST:
TIM BURGARD
of storyboards & comics with *flare* — a perspecacious, peripatetic pow-wow with pal *paul power*
28

WRITER/EDITOR:
RÉMY BASTIEN
in mexico — and lots more! — in *part three*
41

LETTERS:
THE LAST WORD
perhaps we should call this the last *bastien* —?
50

GEORGE PEREZ

"INFINITY GAUNTLET — it may come

I have known George Perez since we were both fans, not professionals. We met while I was still in college, he still in high school, and I was co-publisher of the fanzine in which George's first published work appeared. In all that time, I have seen him grow from a talented amateur to being one of the small number of creators whose name on a project virtually ensures commercial success. He has changed from an artist whose style was an amalgam of the men whose work he admired — Curt Swan, John Buscema, John Romita — into an artist whose work is itself copied by new hands in the comics field.

We began our discussion with questions about his first work for Marvel in about 10 years . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Tell me about this project that you're doing with Jim Starlin.*

GEORGE PEREZ: Well, it's Marvel's crossover series, called THE INFINITY GAUNTLET. It's the final chapter — as final as anything can be, anyway — of

Here and throughout this interview, Perez's pencils from THE INFINITY GAUNTLET.

NO LONGER DO THE LAWS OF NATURE BIND HIM.
HIS WILL CAN BEND THE VERY FABRIC OF REALITY.
HE IS ALL AND ALL THERE IS IS NOW HIS TO COMMAND.
THANOS IS NOW MIGHTIER THAN DEATH HERSELF.
MORE POWERFUL THAN ANY FORCE IN THE UNIVERSE.

All artwork accompanying this interview ™1991 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

closer to the SECRET WARS concept."

the Thanos saga that Jim started in SILVER SURFER and continued into the THANOS QUEST prestige book.

PAT: *Is this going to be like many other crossovers — if you don't read every single title, will you be lost as to what's going on?*

GEORGE: Not really. When I got into this, I wanted it to be more traditional, so that the crossovers aren't really necessary to the story. But I did want to do real references to the crossovers. As an example — if something happens to, say, the Hulk, that affects how the Hulk is in his own book and it doesn't disturb the progress of INFINITY GAUNTLET, I still want to be able to show the changes. I want to provide an incentive for the person reading INFINITY GAUNTLET to pick up HULK if he normally doesn't. Whatever happens to a character, it will occur in INFINITY GAUNTLET and the effects will continue in his own book. It may come closer to the SECRET WARS concept — characters will disappear into INFINITY GAUNTLET and then come back in an eye-blink of time in their own titles.

PAT: *How did you wind up as the artist on this, after so many years as a writer/artist?*

GEORGE: I received a series of phone calls. My exclusive contract with DC expired last August and as people found out about that, I started getting calls. The first person who found out about it was **Jim Valentino**, which is why I agreed to ink his GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY cover, marking my first Marvel work in almost a decade. **Craig Anderson**, the editor of GUARDIANS, found out, as did **Jim Starlin**, and then I got this call from **Starlin**, telling me about this crossover. When he heard I was available, according to Jim, I went right to the top of his list of possible artists. I still believe it was because **Ron Lim** was too busy. *(Laughter.)*

Then Craig called and gave me more information about it. All these discussions took place prior to my contract with DC expiring, so they all knew I couldn't get started until the contract was up. The day my contract expired, I inked the GUARDIANS cover and pencilled and inked a MIGHTY MOUSE cover that marked my first *pencilled* work for Marvel in nearly a decade. Of all things, a MIGHTY MOUSE cover! Then I started in earnest on INFINITY GAUNTLET.

I drew the covers of the first four issues before I even got halfway through issue #1, so they'd have something to show. After I did the covers, I found out Thor's costume had changed, so I had to redraw Thor; I found out Quasar's costume had changed, so I had to redraw Quasar. "This is the last time I help you guys in promotion! This is driving me crazy!" *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Is Jim giving you full scripts?*

GEORGE: I agreed to full scripts because I haven't been keeping up with the Marvel books. I don't feel qualified to handle Marvel's characters — I don't know where most of them are. So, for this one story, I agreed to go in strictly as the penciller. I have absolutely *no* say in the plot of this story. This is Jim's baby, from the beginning.

PAT: *How does it feel to suddenly turn back into "just a penciller"?*

GEORGE: In this case, a little aggravating, unnerving. You might read something you don't agree with and not be able to change it. Jim did provide me, thankfully, with *carte blanche* on how to lay out the book. For his own reference, he provided a grid for every page, suggesting the layout — which I ignored every single time. But he told me not to pay attention to it if I didn't want to; he

GEORGE PEREZ

"I don't think I would do another story

didn't want to hamper *my* storytelling. He didn't want me drawing like **Jim Starlin,** but to do it my way. From time to time, if doing it my way required breaking up word balloons or adding a word to a caption for emphasis, or because I carried a scene over to the next page, I was given the freedom to do that.

I do get a little antsy about wanting to do more in the story, particularly when the characters in the background are just standing around. I'd like them to do something visually . . . it gets frustrating not being able to do *more* than that. But that's what I agreed to when I came onto this project. I don't think I would do another story where I wasn't at least the co-plotter. My input is there on INFINITY GAUNTLET, they can tell what I've done with the storytelling and the pacing, but the actual content is

"WHAT MERIT HAS BEAUTY BE IT NOT CHERISHED AND HONORED?
"HOW COULD I GAZE SO DEEP INTO MY LOVED ONES SOUL AND NOT BUILD MONUMENTS TO HER?
I BEHOLD A DEITY, YET FIRST I WAS A MAN

where I was not at least the co-plotter."

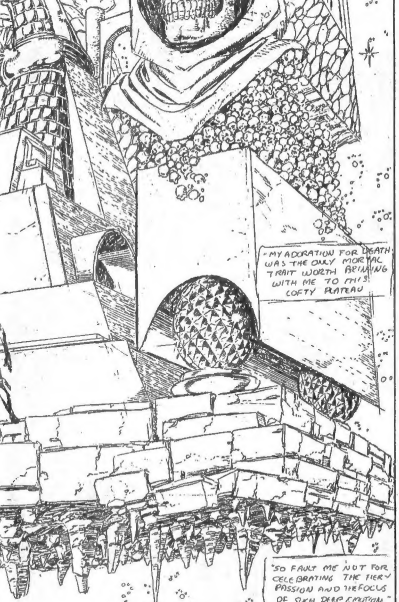
totally Jim's. I would really like to contribute a little more to the actual story in future projects.

PAT: *How long were you exclusive to DC?*

GEORGE: I believe it was six years.

PAT: *What made you decide not to renew this time around?*

GEORGE: When I first signed the exclusive contract with DC, it was a financial agreement. I was getting a house and I wanted to make sure I had enough money for a down payment and other costs that would be incurred. DC agreed to advance me the money against future royalties. They asked, initially, for a five-year exclusive contract, to make sure that I could pay off the loan. As it turned out, the royalties I earned paid off the debt in one year. Then, having sunk so much into the house, I renewed the contract for a year in order to have the cash to pay my taxes.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"SO FAULT ME NOT FOR CELEBRATING THE FIERY PASSION AND THE FOCUS OF SUCH DEEP EMOTION"

The benefits I got out of the contract included a guarantee of a certain amount of work, plus I was under their medical plan. I got vacation pay. There were a lot of benefits to being exclusive. I wouldn't do it again, because I prefer saying "no" to a project because I'm not interested, rather than because I can't accept it contractually. I like the freedom of choice.

PAT: *How did it feel to be back at Marvel after so long?*

GEORGE: Flattering. So many people at Marvel had changed — I'm sure I don't know half the people there now; half of them probably weren't reading comics when I started in the business — but I was very flattered that they *wanted* to work with me. When you work for just one company for so long, you forget that the other companies' personnel are aware of what you're doing.

I thought that, when my contract expired, I would have to go out and *ask* for work, to drum up assignments. But, before my contract expired, I was booked until 1992. I ended up overbooked — I overcommitted myself. I was so in awe of all the attention I was getting.

PAT: *I remember you doing that when you were just starting.*

GEORGE: And I'm still surprised that I haven't learned my lesson yet! *(Laughter.)*

At the time when I did three-and-a-half books a month, I was a lot faster, hungrier, perhaps, and I didn't do the research for *real* detail that I do today. Before I would fill in backgrounds with lines and shapes . . . if it was a building, put in a few vertical and horizontal lines — you've got a building. Now I try to make the buildings look like real buildings. I use photo references — if a scene takes place in New York, I try to use *real* places in New York. In WONDER WOMAN, once we said she was based in Boston, I couldn't make it just an anonymous city — it had to *be* Boston or else why put it there?

That kind of dedication to research and reference has made my work more complex, more real — and a hell of a lot slower.

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PEREZ!

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"The graphic novel is my last involvement with the Titans."

PAT: *Are you ever going to go back to a month-to-month involvement with NEW TITANS?*

GEORGE: No. The graphic novel — the long, long-delayed graphic novel —

PAT: *The "real-soon-now" graphic novel.*

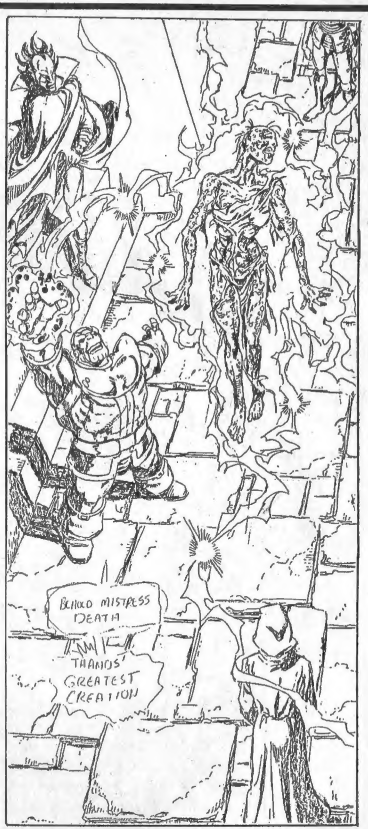
GEORGE: — of which I have penciled more than 80 pages and laid out 94 — out of 120 pages — is my last involvement with the Titans. At this point, the book is going in different directions, because of the editorial guidance. Marv and **Tom Grummett** are working their magic on it now . . . and it's pretty far away from what I remember it being. As it should be. Look at today's X-MEN compared to that title when it started . . . the book has changed radically.

The graphic novel is an old-fashioned Titans story. Considering I started it four years ago, that's not surprising. It has the original cast of the 1980s group, as opposed to whatever the line-up might be when it finally comes out. I've already suggested that I put in a prolog and epilog with the current cast, making the bulk of the story an untold flashback — so it doesn't look like exactly what it is: a *very old story. (Laughter.)*

PAT: *You started out as an artist. On TITANS, you eventually became a co-plotter. On WONDER WOMAN, you became a writer-artist, then just a writer, finally just a plotter again, with someone else doing the scripts. How did it feel to see your ideas handled by other people?*

GEORGE: The first artist I had the privilege of that relationship with was **Art Adams.** I started off pretty strong. The first time I worked with another artist handling my plot and script was the first WONDER WOMAN annual — with **Art Adams, John Bolton, José Luis Garcia-Lopez, Brian Bolland, Chris Marrinan, Curt Swan** (always an idol of mine) and **Ross Andru.** I had a very prestigious start as a writer for other artists.

The biggest challenge was when I got the artwork back. I was doing plot, not full-script, and you always get back some stuff that's totally different from what you envisioned . . . and some that is *exactly* what you envisioned. I think **Andru** and **Garcia-Lopez** are the prime examples of that — I got exactly what I was expecting. With **Art Adams,** I got a lot more cheesecake than I was expecting . . . but it was **Art Adams.** I should have expected it. With the **Bolton** chapter, he wasn't the artist originally scheduled for that section. So I got something *totally* different.



"I really wanted to knock Marvel's socks off."

The one thing I enjoyed immensely in doing that issue as my first story with other artists is that it forced me to learn to adapt to different styles very quickly. Writing for John was totally different from writing for Curt and totally different from writing for Ross. Ross is a master storyteller, John is an illustrator; it was two totally different approaches to a story. Some artists would emphasize things that you would have handled differently, so that you might have to cover in copy something that wasn't covered in the artwork.

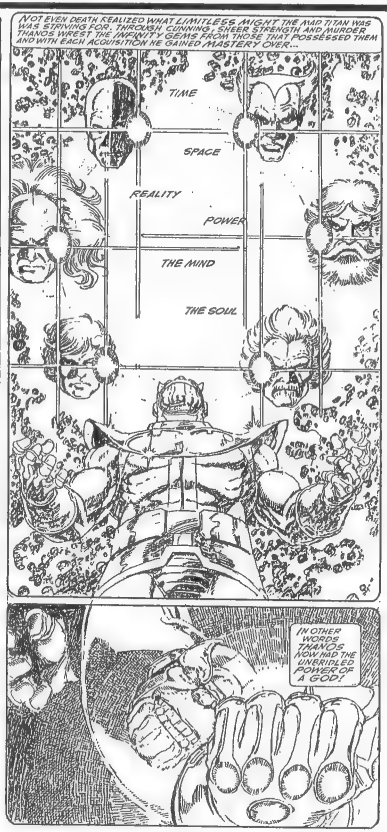
Sometimes it can be frustrating. That first issue was so new to me that I was just in awe of it. Working with those men, I was gratified. Other times, you feel that the artist didn't quite get it right — or didn't think the way you did. You learn that, in doing a plot, for some artists you have to write a lot more to make sure they know what you're thinking — because they're not mind-readers and they're not you. Some artists understand you right away. Marv and I had a very good relationship; I knew how Marv thought. We got to a point that we didn't even have written plots. We discussed it, I drew it — sometimes with margin notes for Marv — and Marv would do a script.

Some artists are big on characterization, others on action. You have to adjust your writing style for that. For some artists, I've written full scripts, to make sure they understand what should be emphasized and to show that you *can* fit a certain amount of copy in a page — if you design the page correctly. For a series I'm doing for DC — THE HOLY WARS — I've gone a little further than that. It's sort of **Keith Giffen** style; I'm actually laying out the pages, full-size, so that the artist knows exactly what the storytelling will be.

The more I become a writer, the more it seems I go back to being an artist/writer again. I've been drawing for so long it's hard *not* to get into the visuals of the book, somehow. What I do depends on how receptive the artist is and how much faith I have in him or her . . . and how experienced that artist is. Now I know what it's like to be on the other end.

PAT: *Jim Starlin is a writer/artist. Have you and he had any discussions about this regarding INFINITY GAUNTLET?*

GEORGE: The only thing I told Jim was that I wanted more characters involved than he had originally planned. Since this was my first book for Marvel in nearly a decade, I really wanted to knock their socks off. I wanted a shot at drawing all the characters I could get my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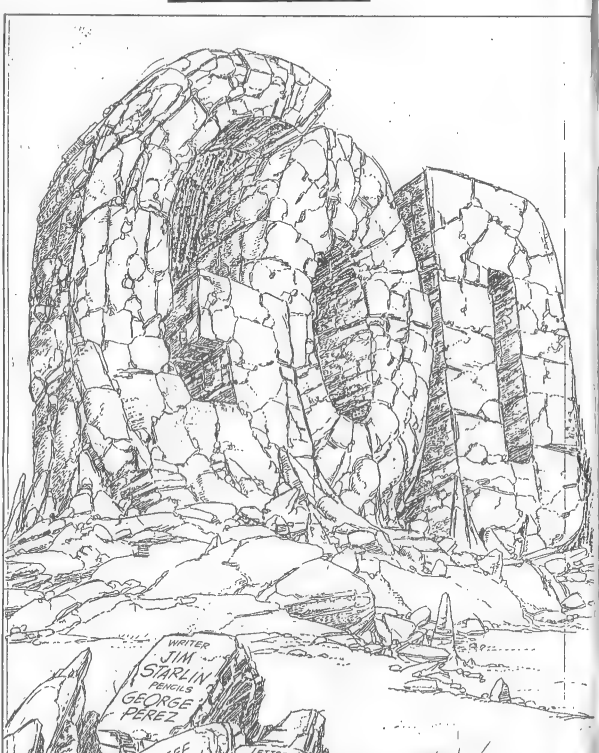
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MY HUMBLE PERSONAGE BOWS BEFORE YOUR GRANDEUR.
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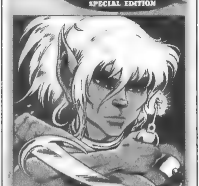

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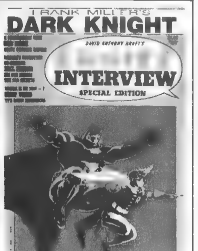

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"THE HOLY WARS is my DC crossover series."

hands on in a short amount of time. Basically, that's all I asked of Jim, Jim knew my style of storytelling when he asked to work with me . . . and we have a lot of things that we agree on. Jim is more experienced at writing for other artists than I am and he has learned that the worst thing he can do is try to control the artist's hand. He makes suggestions, but he gives his artists a free hand on how they lay out the story. He's already written the dialog, so he knows you can't draw anything that will contradict the words in their mouths.

Most writer/artists are probably the same; we know what it's like to be on the other side of the fence. Our artistic egos being what they are, no one likes to be told how to draw; the same is true of writers. I would never tell Marv how to write, he wouldn't tell me how to draw. If he wanted to draw, he'd draw the book — whether it would sell, I don't know.

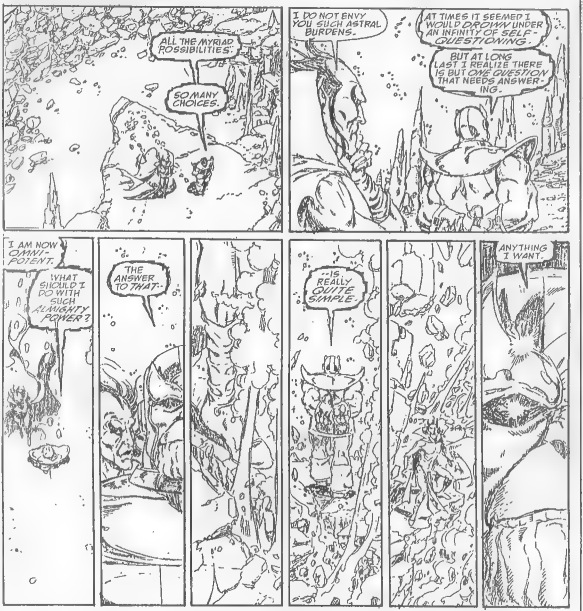
A lot of writers who started out as artists are much more understanding in working with other artists. A person who has been an artist understands that the word "crowd" — five letters on a word processor — is a totally different concept for an artist. "Crowd" means a lot of work.

PAT: *J. Michael Straczynski, a TV writer, once said that if a screenwriter puts in the phrase "Exterior — Space," he's added a million dollars to the budget.*

GEORGE: It's very similar. "Car" — that requires reference if you want it to be a decent car. There are more letters in "Silver Surfer" than in "Galactus," but Galactus takes a lot longer to draw! *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Tell me some more about THE HOLY WARS. I haven't heard anything about that.*

GEORGE: THE HOLY WARS is my DC crossover series — I'm working on the crossovers for *both* companies.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— Don Thompson
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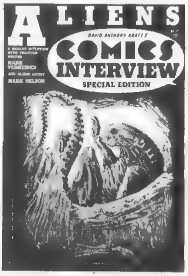
FRAZETTA. Frank Frazetta. This artist of great renown shares his thoughts on many media from comics to fine art. Frazetta cover

SEX & VIOLENCE IN COMICS. Frank Miller, John Byrne, Jerry Perles together with Ron Turner all expound on the limits and far-reaching effects of laws and perceptions. Plus an open forum from the star-studded Chicago trade show on the censorship theme

WATCHMEN. Alan Moore reveals what he thinks of super-heroes, and talks about his controversial creation. Daniel Greenberg and Ray Winninger on the WATCHMEN game modules. Hank Rose on the secrets of a marketeer. Dave Gibbons cover

LONE WOLF. Frank Miller speaks his mind. Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima, creators of a Japanese legend, in a talk from Tokyo. Plus First Comics crew Rick Obadiah, Kurt Goldzung, Alex Wald, Paul Gunlan, Willie Schubert and Rick Oliver. Kojima cover



ALIENS. Mark Nelson and Mark Verheiden point out the positive and negative problems of dealing with Aliens. Mike Richardson and Randy Stradley on directing a Dark Horse, and managing freelance talent. Nelson cover

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"I'm not going to be the Salman Rushdie of comics."

PAT: *It'll be interesting to do a comparison this year.*

GEORGE: In INFINITY GAUNTLET, many of the leaders of the established pantheons of gods make appearances . . . and HOLY WARS deals with the pantheons in the DC Universe going at each other to stake their claim on Earth, to gather all the religions into one. By religions, I mean the mythologies. I'm not going to be the **Salman Rushdie** of comics, thank you. *(Laughter.)*

The concepts are very similar, so my hope in HOLY WARS is to make it much more cerebral — not to be condescending to Jim's work. I want it to be more character-oriented.

HOLY WARS is DC's celebration of Wonder Woman's 50th anniversary. She is the linchpin of the series. The whole idea of religion and belief is very strong in HOLY WARS, as opposed to the more cosmic knock-down drag-out fight of INFINITY GAUNTLET. HOLY WARS is much more a case of having to read everything to know the story. There's a goblet that figures in the story — the one Heracles used to drug Hyppolyta and was given back to her in issue #50. It's stolen in the course of the story — but its recovery is handled in BATMAN, mostly because I wanted to do a Dark Knight and the Holy Grail-type story. There will be crossovers to DR. FATE as well.

I've gotten some great help on this from people like **Bill Loebs, John Ostrander** and **Dan Raspler.**

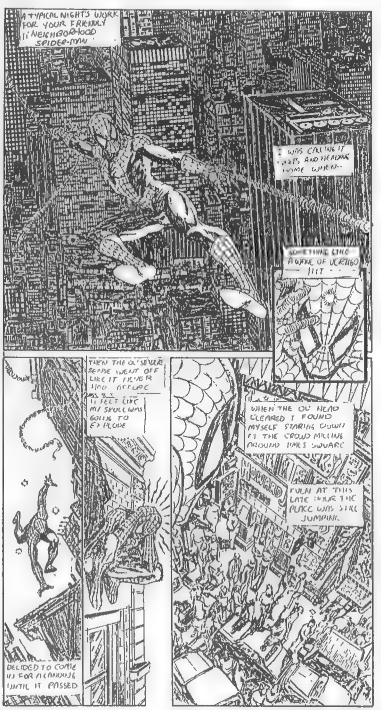
There are obviously going to be comparisons between the two series. In some cases, I've had to do designs of different versions of the same gods. **Cynthia Martin** is actually doing the art for HOLY WARS, following my layouts. That will be coming out in the fall, so INFINITY GAUNTLET should be finished by then. I won't be competing against myself.

Captain Marvel will also play a part in HOLY WARS, as I explain the Z for Zeus in his name, since he has a mix of Greek and Roman names in his SHAZAM, as well as Solomon, a Judaic name. I have some ideas on handling how they all get mixed together — but I don't want to tip my hand.

INFINITY GAUNTLET is a Thanos story; HOLY WARS is a Wonder Woman/mythology story — putting heroes in the roles of the great myths.

PAT: *Having done all these crossovers, as well as group books such as TITANS, JUSTICE LEAGUE, AVENGERS, is there anything left sitting around in comics for you to say, "Hey, I want to try my hand at that!"?*

GEORGE: At this point, not much. I have been asked, by DC, that I create something new on my next project. If I do, I'll be working with **Karen Berger,** my favorite editor of all time. I know I won't be drawing a regular series again for quite a while — of course, I said that before I took on WONDER WOMAN, too. After I finish all the work I've got now — including CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED's JULIUS CAESAR, which is also on my schedule — I think the first thing I'll do is take a couple of months off.


I'M CALLIN' IT EARLY, AND HEADING HOME. WHERE--
SOMETHING LIKE A FLASH OF LIGHTNING -- !!!?
THEN THE OBSERVER BEGINS TO SHRINK AND SHRIVEL UP!
IT FELT LIKE MY SOUL WAS GOING TO EXPLODE!
WHEN THE OLYMPIAN GOD CLEARED IT FOUND MYSELF STARING DOWN AT THE CROWD MILLING AROUND THE SQUARE!
EVEN AT THIS LITTLE TIME THE PLACE WAS STILL JUMPING!
DECIDED TO COME IN FOR A LANDING WITH IT PASSED

"Bantam wanted a novelization of ROCKETEER,

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION ©1991 Paramount Pictures / SWAMP THING ©1991 DC Comics, Inc. / THE ROCKETEER ©1991 David Stevens.

totally unaware I'd done the comic book for Disney."

ROCKETEER
THE OTHER COMIC

Peter David and I go back a long way, to a time when neither of us was a professional of any kind in the comics industry. I wrote for his STAR TREK fanzine. I performed in several of his TREK film parodies at conventions, usually as Dr. McCoy. So, it was no big deal to call him up and ask about his latest projects, adapting the ROCKETEER movie to comics and then writing the novelization as well! I hope the bantering nature of our relationship comes out in this interview . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *I guess the first thing to ask is — how did you get the assignment to do first the ROCKETEER movie adaptation to comics and then the novelization?*

PETER DAVID: I turned around one day, the TV screen came on and said, "Mr. David, you're needed." **Bob Foster** called me up from Disney Comics and asked, "Would you be interested in doing the ROCKETEER adaptation?" Why he chose me I haven't the faintest idea. I guess he was familiar with my work. Perhaps **Len Wein** recommended me to him. Maybe they just felt sorry for me.

I was immediately intrigued by the idea, because I wanted to find out what would happen in the movie. So I said, "Yeah, sure."

When you're doing a comic-book adaptation, it's not really writing so much as creative typing. You're just trying to jigsaw the movie script into the allotted space. It was really just an incredible interest in the project that made me take the job. When they asked me if I wanted to do it, the first thing — and the second thing — and the third thing — that I said to them was, "Why don't you get **Dave Stevens** to do it?" They said, "No, he doesn't want to do it." I tried to call Dave and ask, but I never heard from him, so I guess it was OK.

A few weeks ago, I got a call from my agent, **Sharon Jarvis,** and she told me she'd been contacted by **Rob Simpson** at Bantam Books. He wanted to know if I'd be interested in doing the novelization of the ROCKETEER. He was totally unaware I'd done the comic book for Disney; he'd asked other people before me. My name had been bandied about and he contacted me on that basis

He needed someone who could do a good job and do it quick. That was one of the main requirements — the deadline, which was iron-clad, was February 1 . . . and I wasn't contacted until the first week of January.

PAT: *Eeesh . . .*

PETER: Now, I figured that, at least, I had read the script already. If I hadn't, I would have hesitated to do it. But because I had already read the script, I knew it was a solid film. I knew the things I would bring to it were along the lines of adding scenes; it wouldn't need heavy restructuring to turn it into a novel. Since I was familiar with it, I felt competent to turn it into a novel.

PAT: *Who's doing the art on the comic adaptation?*

PETER: Russ Heath, I understand.

PAT: *To some extent, a similar style to Stevens', in the sense of detail and things like that. A good choice.*

PETER: Thank you — I had nothing to do with it.

PAT: *I assume you did full script, so you have not seen any of the artwork?*

PETER: Not a thing.

You have to do full script on this kind of project. For one thing, when you're doing something for Disney, as with any licensed product, it goes through so many hands and so many eyes and so many stages of approval, if you don't do full script, all you're doing is doubling the amount of time the approval process will take. Persons A through Z will have to look at every stage of the process; it's madness to do a plot, have it approved, the art, have it approved, the script, and have it approved. So you do the whole script — plot, panel breakdowns and dialogue — and you have some hope of getting it done in some civilized amount of time.

PAT: *I understand that you are under extreme legal obligations — blood oath, threat of death — if you reveal any of the plot.*

PETER: True.

PAT: *Without doing that, does it seem a little silly to you, since it's based on a plot in a comic book that has already seen print?*

PETER: It's based on characters and concepts in the ROCKETEER stories, and I feel perfectly at ease in saying that many of the characters and concepts that were present in the comic book have made a faithful translation to the silver screen, as it were. The characters are there intact; the one deviation is that Betty is now called Jenny. I assume there are legal reasons — although the less charitable might say it's so **Jennifer Connelly** won't blow her cues.

I don't think I'd be tripping up anything by saying what's *not* in there. Doc Savage is not there, the entire sequence with the Locust airplane being stolen is not there. There's much more of a supporting structure.

PAT: *Of course, it also resolves the story, which Dave Stevens never had a chance to do . . .*

PETER: I think it would really blow people away if it took Disney several years to get this movie out. *(Laughter.)*

"There is no focused villain in the ROCKETEER series."

Things in the movie have their own dramatic pacing. For example, it takes until about page 35 in the script to get to the point **Dave Stevens** got to by page 5 of the first part of ROCKETEER. There are additional supporting characters and a consistent villain. There is no focussed villain in the first ROCKETEER series.

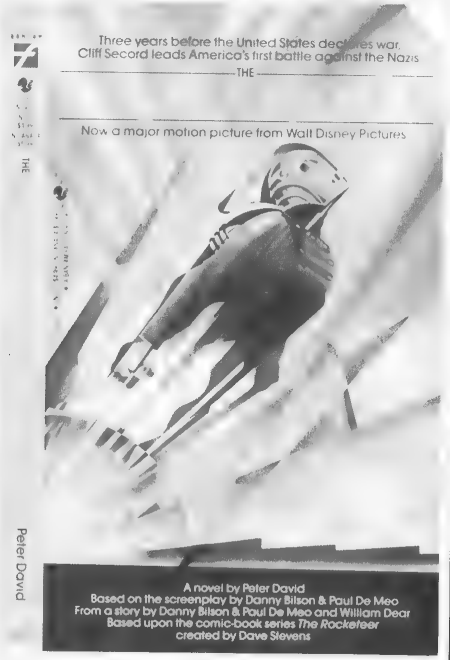
PAT: *Dave could introduce a lot of things very quickly in the comic, because comic readers are used to certain things. A comic reader will accept a rocket pack attached to a leather jacket — "OK, sure, that's no problem. I can believe six impossible things before breakfast." But Hollywood's powers-that-be seem to think the movie audience needs more build-up for those things.*

PETER: They need more encouragement to suspend their disbelief, I would think.

In the movie, there is much more testing of the rocket pack before Cliff actually dons it, although the reasons he dons it are similar to those in the comic book. The sequence where he has to save someone is virtually identical.

PAT: *In adapting the early part of the script, did you find yourself collapsing it back to something more like Stevens' original?*

PETER: Actually, when I did the adaptation, I didn't have the comic book near


Three years before the United States declares war.
Cliff Secord leads America's first battle against the Nazis
THE
Now a major motion picture from Walt Disney Pictures
THE
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A novel by Peter David
Based on the screenplay by Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo
From a story by Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo and William Dear
Based upon the comic-book series The Rocketeer
created by Dave Stevens

For Walt Disney Pictures' THE ROCKETEER — a novel by Peter David. (An uncorrected cover proof [the logo will have a drop shadow to prop it out, for example] of the novelization.)

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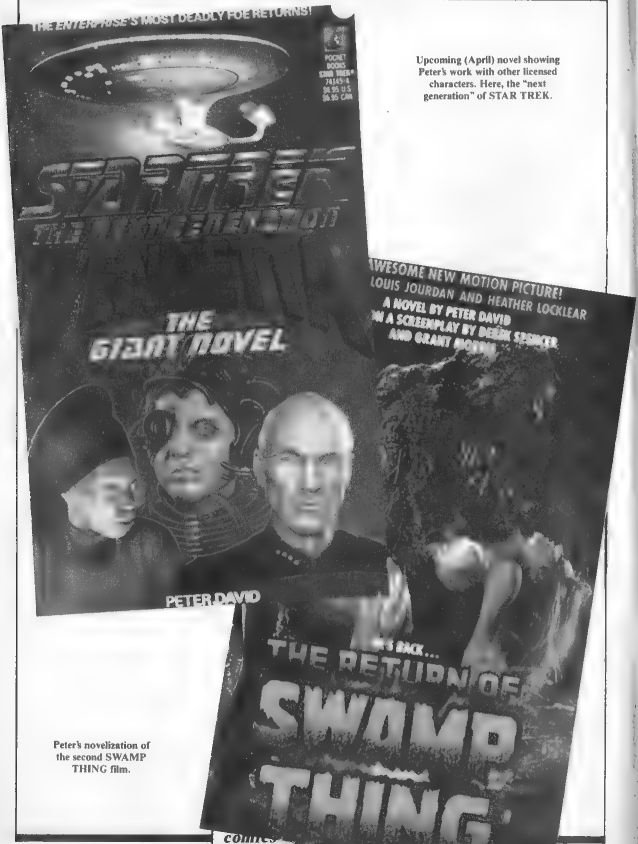
"There are additional supporting characters and a villain."



Upcoming (April) novel showing Peter's work with other licensed characters. Here, the "next generation" of STAR TREK.

Peter's novelization of the second SWAMP THING film.

Writer of the adaptation and novelization of the upcoming ROCKETEER film from Disney Productions — Peter David.

"Huge chunks of script are not in the comic adaptation."

me. When you're doing an adaptation, what really happens — I go through the script with a pen, trying to figure out exactly how much space everything will take. "This is page 1, panel 1; this is panel 2; this is panel 3." It's a matter of figuring out how the overall thing works out. You read over the script and say, "What are the sequences that people are most likely to remember when they come out of the film?" Those are the things they will expect to see in the adaptation. Those are the things I try to keep in.

So it wouldn't strike me as impossible that it bears a resemblance to Dave's original storytelling. The sequence where Cliff saves someone, the first time he's the Rocketeer, took about two to three pages in Dave's original, and that's about how long it is in mine. It was the first major action sequence and I wanted to devote some space to it, especially since there was a much greater build-up to it.

PAT: *Since you said you had a February 1 deadline for the novelization — and we're talking on the evening of February 1 — I assume you have finished it?*

PETER: Due to the incredible patience and understanding of my comic-book editors, I might add.

PAT: *You've done novelizations before — you did the novelization of the second SWAMP THING movie. How does doing a novelization of a film from its script differ from doing the comic adaptation?*

PETER: For one thing, you can get the whole script in. There are huge chunks of the script that are simply not in the comic-book adaptation. You don't have to be a math whiz to figure out that a 125-page film script is not going to fit into a 64-page comic book.

PAT: *Only if you do really, really tiny pictures with really, really tiny prints . . .*

PETER: And everybody stands sideways or is seen in close-up. *(Laughter.)*

In the novel, not only does the screenplay fit, but you're expected to put in *more* stuff. The reasoning is that there's no point to buying the novelization if it's only the screenplay with "he said" and "she said" added. When you're acting as a novelizer, you're almost a director. You're reading the script and picking certain intonations and what's going through the characters' minds as conveyed by the actors. Except you weren't on the set, and you don't know how the actors chose to play it. You keep your fingers crossed and hope you don't get angry notes from people at Disney, saying, "No, no, he wasn't smirking when he said that; he was looking bemused."

PAT: *I take it, then, you have not seen anything of the film yet?*

PETER: I have seen slides — and I didn't even see the slides until I'd finished my main draft of the novelization. Then they sent the slides and I was able to make some quick changes in terms of descriptions.

They just finished principal photography. They had to keep switching sequences as stuntmen got blown up, I understand. That put a crimp in things. I understand they used real rocket packs.

PAT: *Really?*

PETER: That may just be pre-movie hype but, on the other hand, the stuff on the slides looks pretty damned convincing.

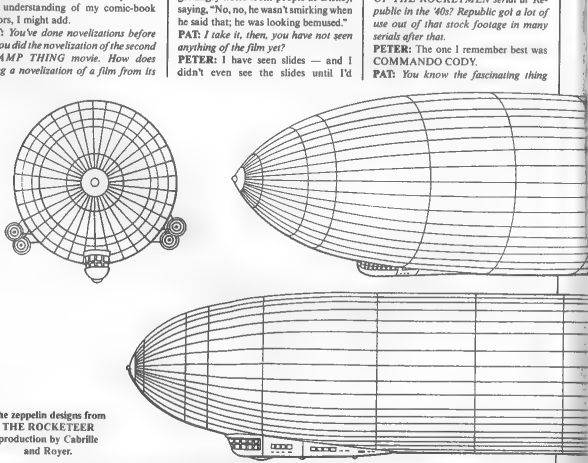
PAT: *If they've got anything with people flying with the rocket pack in the slides, then they must have . . . otherwise the flight sequences would all be post-production*

PETER: There are shots of Cliff airborne. If they have any brains at all, it wasn't **Bill Campbell.** That's the joy of a film like this: You put a stuntman in there, and who's going to tell?

PAT: *He's got that wonderful full-face helmet.* (Laughter.) *Why do you think they used a helmet like that for the KING OF THE ROCKETMEN serial at Republic in the '40s? Republic got a lot of use out of that stock footage in many serials after that.*

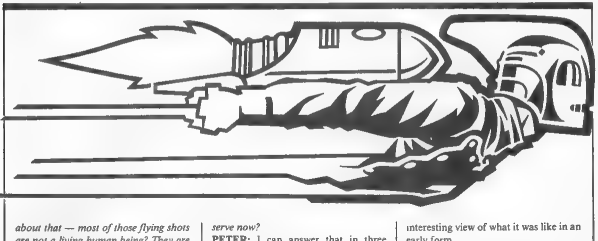
PETER: The one I remember best was COMMANDO CODY.

PAT: *You know the fascinating thing*



The zeppelin designs from THE ROCKETEER production by Cabrille and Royer.

"But in the novel, you're supposed to put in *more* stuff."



about that — most of those flying shots are not a living human being? They are three-quarter sized dummies.

PETER: I know that's how they did the flying scenes in ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL. Much more effective than what they did in the SUPERMAN serial, cutting to an animated figure

PAT: *Don Thompson has asked, in the era of videotape, when the home video version of almost any movie will come out within six months to a year of its theatrical run, what is the purpose of a comic-book adaptation? At one time, it was the only way you could have a visual representation of the film, as a memento, a remembrance. What purpose does it serve now?*

PETER: I can answer that in three words: God Only Knows.

My assumption is they do it because it will sell. If it weren't selling, they wouldn't do it. I still haven't figured out what they need novelizations for. I guess they figure it's a way to reach an additional audience. It's really for the younger kids, who see the movie, then the comic, and go, "buy me that, buy me that!" Parents, always eager to encourage their kids to read — and rightly so — get them the comic-book adaptation.

There are interesting aspects to it: The adaptation is from an early draft of the screenplay, so there may be things in there that are *not* in the movie. It's an interesting view of what it was like in an early form.

Certainly with ROCKETEER, it's apropos.

It's merchandising. One more place to make money . . . you get into the comic-book stores, Waldenbooks, B. Dalton's. they're not really hoping to make big bucks on the comic book, it's out there to serve the same purpose as T-shirts and keychains and buttons . . . it's a feeder mechanism to get people into the movie. That's where the money is.

PAT: *Tell us some of the things that are in your adaptation or your novel that are not in the movie. I assume you can talk about those?*

PETER: Sure, why not. In the comic book, most of what's there will be in the movie. With 64 pages, you have enough trouble fitting in what is in the script, let alone adding in new stuff.

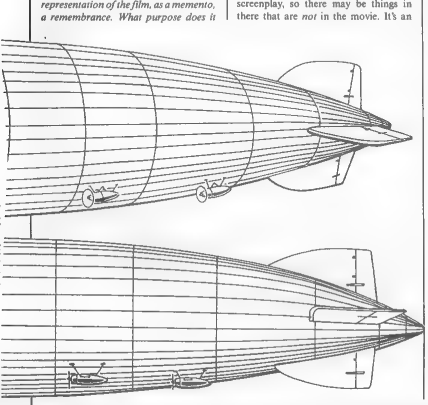
With the novelization, however —

For example, in the beginning of Dave's original ROCKETEER comic, we never actually saw the theft of the rocket — the bad guys just had it. The movie does it the same way. In the novel, we actually see the theft of the rocket.

All movies tend to work with a visual shorthand. You immediately jump from one thing to the next and, because the movie keeps rolling along at high speed, the audience never questions anything.

In a novel, you can't do that. If you do, you have a very weak novel. Thus, there are certain bridging sequences I put in. At one point, Cliff has hidden the rocket pack, but the script doesn't say where. My novel does. Little things like that give the novel more strength.

There's a sequence where Cliff shows up on the set of a movie Jenny is making. In the script, he just shows up — she turns around and there he is. I've been to studio lots; it's not that easy. You can't just go wandering onto a lot . . . and the sound stages are not marked except by



"I'm one of a handful with experience

Camera tracks away from the ground as the Rocketeer spirals past -out of control.
SLOW ROTATION
Rocketeer loops & zooms past camera, flying

writing comic-book characters and novels."

Two frames of storyboards from the upcoming ROCKETEER film.

numbers and letters. If you don't know the designation of the stage you're looking for, you're screwed.

I put in a sequence of Cliff sneaking onto the lot, while the guard is distracted by **Mae West.** And I show Cliff wandering around the lot, looking for the right stage. "This is in 1938," I thought to myself. "What movies came out in 1939 that might reasonably have been shooting?" So Cliff runs into **Margaret Hamilton** in full witch gear — and he gives her pointers on how to do the witch laugh. He runs into **Clark Gable,** running his lines from GONE WITH THE WIND. He also runs into a bit actor from GWTW, **George Reeves,** who is reading ACTION COMICS #1 and its new character, Superman.

I have no idea if all this will see print. I just turned in the manuscript today.

PAT: *You don't know what Disney might object to?*

PETER: Exactly. It's Disney's game.

PAT: *Will they object to mentioning the name "Superman" in something copyrighted to them?*

PETER: I have no idea. I felt I had some degree of license to introduce people who actually existed in 1938, because they did it in the movie. There are appearances by various movie stars who were big in 1938. If they were there in the film, then that tone is being established. I also fleshed out certain scenes, accordingly. There's a scene with a society matron who runs into the Rocketeer in a fancy restaurant. The society matron is not named — I named her: **Margaret Dumont.**

I tried to work in historical background on what was going on in 1938. How people viewed **Adolf Hitler,** for instance. I was fascinated, doing my research, that in *NEW YORK TIMES* articles of the time, the debate about what to do about **Hitler** was eerily the same as the debate regarding **Saddam Hussein.** It was a nice crash course in history repeating itself.

I tried to flesh out the history of other fliers of the time and work that in. At about that time, a pilot named **Doug Corrigan** wanted to do a solo flight across the Atlantic. The U.S. government wouldn't give him permission. He did it anyway and, on landing in Ireland, claimed that he'd gotten there by accident because of a stuck compass and he'd gone the wrong way. He was thereafter dubbed **"Wrong-Way" Corrigan.** In the course of the novel, I bring out that Peevey is the one who came up with that name.

In the comic book, Doc Savage is hinted at being the inventor of the rocket pack. They can't do that in the movie, but as a tip of the hat to the original, I have Peevey contemplate the idea that the rocket pack is like something out of pulp novels, something that Doc Savage might have done.

PAT: *You have now adapted a STAR TREK movie for comics . . .*

PETER: Yeah, the really *good* one — TREK V . . .

PAT: *You have continued STAR TREK series in comics. Under the incredibly* mysterious pseudonym David Peters you wrote novels based on PHOTON. You've written TREK novels and now ROCKETEER stuff. Do you ever feel you might be getting the comic-book equivalent of type-cast?

PETER: Not really. I like to think I surprise people with my diversity. If you mean that people might think, "Oh, **Peter David,** he only works with licensed material . . ." I don't see why. All the super-heroes are licensed in a sense, they are owned by people other than the current creative team. I don't own the rights to Jean-Luc Picard or the Rocketeer; I also don't own the rights to Hulk or Spider-Man.

PAT: *I guess I meant in terms of being the person who handles adaptations or continuations from film and/or television.*

PETER: I don't think so. It's coincidence to some degree. Doing adaptations used to be a much larger part of comics than it is now. At Marvel, I wrote nothing of this kind. I'm doing a handful really, but I'm doing the blindingly successful ones. PHOTON was more of a fluke than anything else.

When it comes to adapting films based on comic-book oriented characters, people start thinking of me because I'm one of a handful of writers with experience writing comic-book characters and writing novels. You can count the number of people who have written comics and original novels on one hand: myself, **Englehart, Claremont, Byrne, Will Murray** and **Max Collins. OK** — you need two hands. That is more or less it. So when there's a novelization of a comic-book character film, they come to me. When there's a novelization of virtually any other movie, they go to **Alan Dean Foster.**

"The Marvel offices are like an armed camp. The

© character 1990 Tim Burgard

days of the happy bullpen are dead and gone."

TIM BURGARD

Tim Burgard (of FLARE fame) was doing some inking for me on my comic-book series PROFESSOR OM and — like the good mate that he is — even did the work for free! So when James (TERMINATOR) Cameron saw a copy of my other comic book, EAST MEETS WEST #1 and offered me the job of story board artist on TERMINATOR II, since I was already busy on RADIO FLYER for Guber-Peters at Columbia, it came to me to return the favor and put James in contact with Tim Burgard. Tim got the job and so we decided to conduct this interview in my kitchen over some wine, cheese and crackers to celebrate. I will say this: It's bloody hard to get a straight answer out of Burgard — crocodile wrestling would have been much easier. I hope you enjoy this (greatly edited) interview!

PAUL POWER: *Have you ever been laid at a convention?.*

TIM BURGARD: Yes, I have. I'm not going to mention names, but I will say it was an ELFQUEST girl, one of these gals that's big into ELFQUEST. Hello, Rachel! *(Laughter.)* Her friends will tell her that she's mentioned here, she knows what for. Actually, it's tough to meet a lady at a convention . . . well, it's not *tough*, it's just that there aren't that many. I guess if you're a professional you can come off a little bit more heroic and everything, big shot, that type of deal. Anybody that has any sort of name, I guess.

PAUL: *Oh. I'm kind of taken aback when anybody recognizes that I've done work in comics.*

TIM: Well, me, too.

PAUL: *Sometimes I get embarrassed, but I* want *that recognition.*

TIM: They know me just for my name, that's what really gets me. Hero Comics has hyped me a little bit, but they only know the fan favorites. That's one thing — I have fans from FLARE, you know. I ended up designing what she looks like and everything, because I was offered this by **Dennis Mallonee.** "Flare is the most popular character in THE CHAMPIONS, I think you would be great for this." I said, "Yeah, I'd love to do it, but the *costume* has to go." It was the most generic boring thing I've ever seen.

PAUL: *You did that great drawing of Flare*

TIM: That drawing is used all over the place, but my logo appears with it, not my name. I created the look Flare has now. I did two separate costumes for her, and I did the first two issues which kind of set a tone. I wanted to make her a little bit more lighthearted and humorous, but with characters like Galloping Gallooper it's — *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Who writes that stuff?*

TIM: Dennis writes it.

PAUL: *Do you like his scripts?*

TIM: I get to add quite a bit into it, so it works

PAUL: *Change it?*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Tim Burgard
Born: 5 October 1957 — Long Beach, CA
Residence: North Hollywood, CA
Occupation: Artist and Writer
Education: AA degree, Golden West Community College; Bachelor of Fine Arts, Art Center College of Design
Comics Credits: FLASH JORDON (college comic strip); BLOOD SISTERS portfolio; CAR-TOONS pieces; FLARE: ETERNITY SMITH; other stories here and there
Favorite Artists: Michelangelo, Alphonse Mucha, Frank Frazetta, Russ Manning, Wallace Wood

Favorite Authors: Edgar Rice Burroughs, H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, Philip Jose Farmer

Favorite Joke: A lady wakes up and sees in the back there's a gorilla in her tree. She calls the zoo and they say they'll send a man out. He drives up in a van and says, "Lady, my partner called in sick, I'm gonna need your help." He goes to the back of the van and pulls out a gun, hands it to her. He pulls out a pair of handcuffs, hands it to her. He pulls out a vicious, mean dog, keeps it. They go to the backyard. He says, "Lady, what I'm going to do is I'm gonna go up into that tree, I'm gonna shake that branch, that gorilla's gonna fall down. That dog has been specially trained to go for that gorilla's gonads. He's gonna clamp down, it's gonna be in such pain, you just walk over there and handcuff that gorilla and I'll take him away." She says, "What's the gun for?" He says, "Lady, if I fall outa that tree, you shoot that dog!" *(Laughter.)*

"People don't realize these skintight

TIM: No, not so much that. The one for issue #2 where she falls out of her dress, that's a sequence I wanted to do and talked with Dennis. He wanted to do a serious story with it, I said, "No, the tone will be all wrong." And he agreed with me, and so we kept it *light*. The second issue I got to ink myself. The first one we had a villain who was totally stupid, it was *wonderful*. I approached him like a **Chuck Jones** animated character.

I did the same thing with the second one, the Dash, a take on the Flash. I figured this character would be great as a **Don Knotts** type of fidgety character, like a speed freak, and the only thing in heroic proportions on him would be his legs. And every time he uses his speed he looks like a guy in a jet sled — you've seen the pictures of those guys with their mouths stretched back, everything's pulled to the back of the head because of all the G forces. I love it, he's a great character.

But I wanted to do something a little more like ANNIE FANNIE, you know. This whole deal that Dennis is under fire for about cheesecake is a non-issue as far as I'm concerned.

PAUL: *Well, what I find offensive — and I like T&A, I like that stuff — what I don't like is when some people say it's okay for Dave Stevens to draw this stuff but it's not okay for you. If I feel like drawing it, that's what I'm going to do!*

TIM: If **Sheldon Meyer**, who did SUGAR & SPIKE, wants to do girlie art, more power to him — especially if he does a good job.

PAUL: *Do you feel like that's what's going on, it's like an industry prejudice?*

TIM: No. It's not so much with the artists, I think it's the media. There are these *critics* who are basically *fanboys* who say, "How dare you do something like that with a superheroine!" It's like we're having some kind of a . . . oh, what's the word for making it with the dead? *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Necrophilia.*

TIM: Yeah, like it's some sort of necrophiliac affair with Supergirl or something, you know. It's a character, it's a superheroine —

PAUL: *Would they accept it in THE X-MEN?*

TIM: Well, X-MEN is supposed to be "realistic," but there've been pretty women in spandex, it's gone on without them even knowing it. These people have accepted comics to such an extent that they don't realize these skintight outfits, aerobics outfits, are *underwear*.

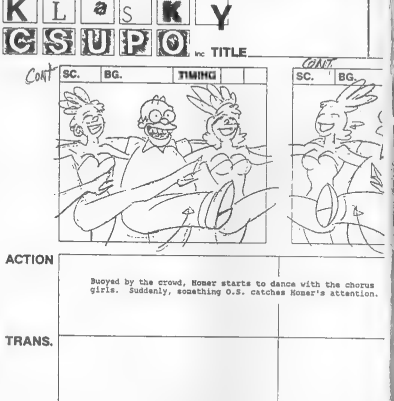
PAUL: *Yeah, well that's the whole fantasy thing. What I'm getting at is that some people are pretty high and mighty about what they feel is right and moral. Their hypocrisy is what I'm trying to get at, that it's okay for these guys but it's not okay for other people to do it. That hypocrisy fucking burns me up.*

TIM: There's nothing wrong with cheesecake, nobody should even apologize for it. My point is that cheesecake could be the major selling point — let's talk realistically, it's fun to do this stuff but you've still got to be able to sell it — it could be the major selling point of something, but you have to sugarcoat it for some people. Cheesecake that's just cheesecake, it's not that appealing even to the artists. Like Dave does his stuff on his nostalgia trip from something like the '30s, and he does it *well*, and that's why people read such artistry in it. He just does nostalgia cheesecake, you know.

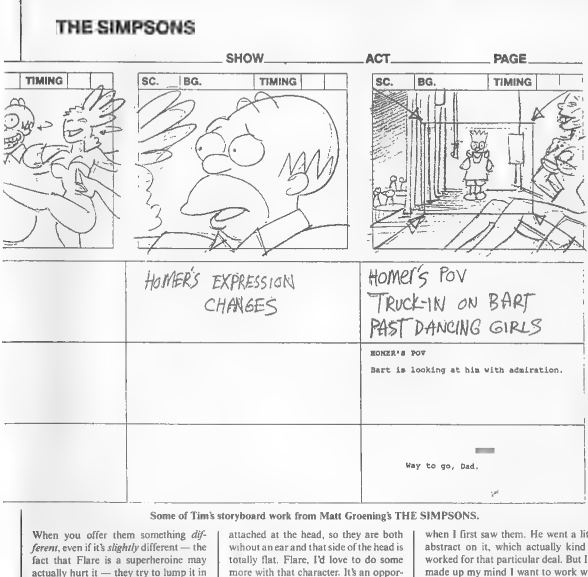
I do superhero cheesecake. And if anybody's complaining it's because they see that there's a pretty woman there *doing* stuff, right away that offends them because I'm not being pretentious at all about it. I'm doing it as something humorous, but the fact is that . . . well, ANNIE FANNIE, I use that as an example because that's the kind of flavor I would like to go for, is done for a totally different audience than the comics audience, and it's wildly successful! They can't do enough of it. **Bill Elder** and **Harvey Kurtzman** cannot do enough ANNIE FANNIE.

PAUL: *Yeah, but that's in an adult magazine and that was already established that way.*

TIM: Well, that's the problem with comics, we're in a *ghetto*! They *expect* to see exactly the same stuff done exactly the same way, just by a different artist.



outfits, aerobics outfits, are *underwear.*"



Some of Tim's storyboard work from Matt Groening's THE SIMPSONS.

When you offer them something *different*, even if it's *slightly* different — the fact that Flare is a superheroine may actually hurt it — they try to lump it in with everything else, every other superhero comic that's out there. We're being damned by the similarities, not the differences, is what I think.

I've been offered — if we can get this thing back on the road — to *write* a FLARE book as well as draw it, in which case I would be concentrating on her as a person who is a fashion model who gets into weird situations, and who *also* has these powers. I'd try to bring in the world of fashion, I would set a lot of it in Europe, or travelling around. And I have a couple of characters I introduced in an ETERNITY SMITH backup, Siamese twins, who are great DICK TRACY characters. They are Siamese twins who were separated at birth, but they were attached at the head, so they are both without an ear and that side of the head is totally flat. Flare, I'd love to do some more with that character. It's an opportunity *to* do cheesecake in a legitimate form, I think.

PAUL: *Will you do it again with Dennis Mallonee? Starting up again, isn't he, with Innovation?*

TIM: Yeah, but he's going to release material that's already done. I have an incomplete project over there, INDIGO, that maybe between the time that I say this and the time it sees print I'll pitch it to Dark Horse so that we can get the whole thing together at one time. DARK HORSE PRESENTS would be perfect. I would have to get all of the artwork back and revamp it because it's designed for color and I'd have to see what I could do to make it for black and white. I went crazy with Will's inks, it blew me away when I first saw them. He went a little abstract on it, which actually kind of worked for that particular deal. But I've made up my mind I want to work with particular inkers who can follow my work pretty closely — I've had bad experiences.

PAUL: *I think that's the interesting thing about comics. I would like to team up people who were just diametrically opposed just to see how the fuck it would turn out.*

TIM: Well, **Jack Kirby** and **Barry Smith. Barry Smith** started off as like a **Kirby** clone but then he developed into something entirely different. When they did that CAPTAIN AMERICA BICENTENNIAL book it turned into something *incredible!*

PAUL: *Oh, it was hot, absolutely beautiful.*

TIM: I've seen **Jack Kirby** inked by

"I'm doing superhero cheesecake."

"I've inked Gil Kane, I've inked Jack Kirby."

Alfredo Alcala, which is something you wouldn't *believe.*

PAUL: *Well, there was DESTROYER DUCK for Eclipse.*

TIM: Oh, that's right, yeah. I inked Jack.

PAUL: *What did you ink him on?*

TIM: Well, I didn't ink him on anything in comics. I've inked **Gil Kane,** I've inked **Jack Kirby,** I got to work with these people and it was a kick. I inked and painted over **Gil Kane,** that is just a mindblower. I inked and painted over **Jack Kirby,** got to work with *giants.* They loved it. I came from an art school where I learned these skills very well, and myself and the other people who were painting at the time came with a more painterly touch. One guy had a **Syd Mead** approach. Put that on top of **Jack Kirby,** you talk about diametrically opposed. **Jack Kirby** came up with this top thing that bores into the moon, it looks like a giant children's top. When it was inked it looked like a mindblowing centerpiece, a **Syd Mead** drawing with some astrological artist doing the landscape.

PAUL: *God.*

TIM: You look at this and you can still make out the shape and get the idea that it's **Kirby,** but it's taken to a finish you would never believe. I painted one myself, for an animation company, a **Jack Kirby** space zoo-type thing with monsters.

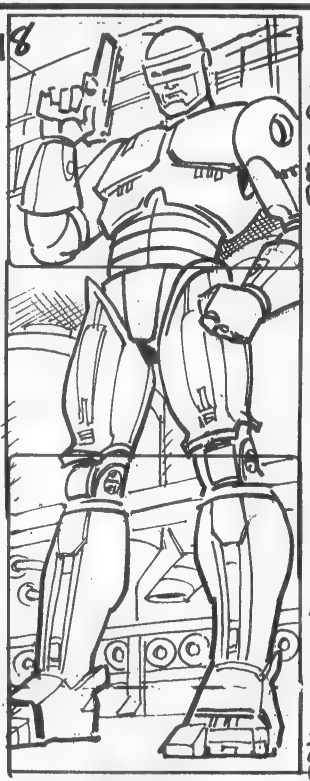
PAUL: *Did you get a print of this?*

TIM: I tried but they warned me that I could lose my job.

PAUL: *That's kind of shitty, you should be able to take shots of your own stuff.*

TIM: This is all top secret type stuff! They keep showing these, so they don't want the idea to go away from their sphere of influence. **Jack Kirby** did a *lot* of development work, just throwing out *ideas,* you know! We'd point him in a direction and he was like a shotgun with his drawing and his ideas. You don't tell him, "Jack, we want a giant worm." He doesn't do a giant worm, he does *fifteen* giant worms plus the people that *fight* the giant worms, everything that they ride on! He gives you more than you'll ever ask for.

Jack could be hysterical. One of the things that they came up with that never made it into a series was a bunch of superheroes that have these abilities but they're like you or me, they don't feel there's any reason why they should help people. He had this one guy who has all the powers like Superman but he just goes and watches people in trouble, watches how they either get out or die.



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More storyboard material, here for Marvel's ROBOCOP.

On Kirby: "He's stepping almost into the fine art modes

(Laughter.)

PAUL: *That was a Jack Kirby concept?*

TIM: It's something he worked on for Ruby Spears, this incredible concept! These guys, they're superheroes but —

PAUL: *The Lazy Squad.* (Laughter.)

TIM: The I-Don't-Give-A-Shit Squad. *(Laughter.)* They basically had no reason to be goody-goody. They had no reason to be criminals, either. They just had these powers and didn't care. "I'm busy now, good luck falling off that cliff." *(Laughter.)* It was hysterical, Jack could be hysterical. But, again, it has to be something that works right.

PAUL: *Did you ever think when you were going to Art Center that you would work with Jack Kirby?*

TIM: Never!

PAUL: *Is Jack still doing that stuff?*

TIM: No, he's semi-retired at this point. He was getting some decent change from doing these things. He's stepping almost into the fine art modes with his pencils, they're getting more like **Moreaux.** The abstractions are so weird. There are certain things that we did that made them work as just illustration. Every piece that he did *worked,* but it only worked because it was all his idea. Once somebody else works on it the whole thing becomes chaos. So, that was what we had to deal with when we were doing **Jack Kirby's** stuff. It was all brilliant, but to have somebody else work on it took away from it, it automatically became less.

PAUL: *If you were to work at Marvel, let's say they were going to give you a gig, what would you hope they would throw at you? What is something that you would have liked to work on over there?*

TIM: Well, I would like . . . I think in terms of if I'm going to work on a one-shot deal, just something that they would throw at me, it would have to be working with somebody that I liked. I would love to work with **Jerry Ordway.** I would love to work with people whose work I admire. If they were to . . . say **Ditko** didn't want to do SPEEDBALL and they wanted me to do something with it, I don't care for the character. But if they said they wanted me to ink **John Byrne** on SPEEDBALL, I don't like the character but I would love to ink **John Byrne.**

PAUL: *So, your last trip to Marvel, what happened there? I tried to put you onto Carl Potts but that didn't work out too well.*

TIM: No, at that time Carl was having a massive breakdown. *(Laughter.)* He was getting married and he was doing all kinds of stuff, so I apologize to him. But I was there for a couple of days on my own expense and it wouldn't have killed the guy to see me for a few minutes, you know. But it wasn't to be.

PAUL: *Did you see anybody else up there?*

TIM: I did see some other people there, **Carol Kalish** and **Kurt Busiek.** I was interested in doing something with a

with his pencils. They're getting more like Moreaux."

science fiction deal because I was getting a little tired of the superhero rut. I've been through all these different superheroes and it . . . wasn't exciting at all. It was fun at the time, but they were all second stringers anyways, so I didn't even have that thrill of nostalgia to be working on something that I followed when I was a kid.

PAUL: *Did you meet any editors while*

On Dinosaur Island (for Secret Origins): "They cancelled

you were there?

TIM: I . . . those offices, the Marvel offices, were *weird*, like an armed camp. The front office has got this door that looks like the Rand Corporation, you have to have a card to get in, to slip into the sliding glass door. The days of the happy Marvel Bullpen are dead, dead and *gone*.

PAUL: *It's a corporate nightmare?*

TIM: It's a corporate NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET. *(Laughter.)*

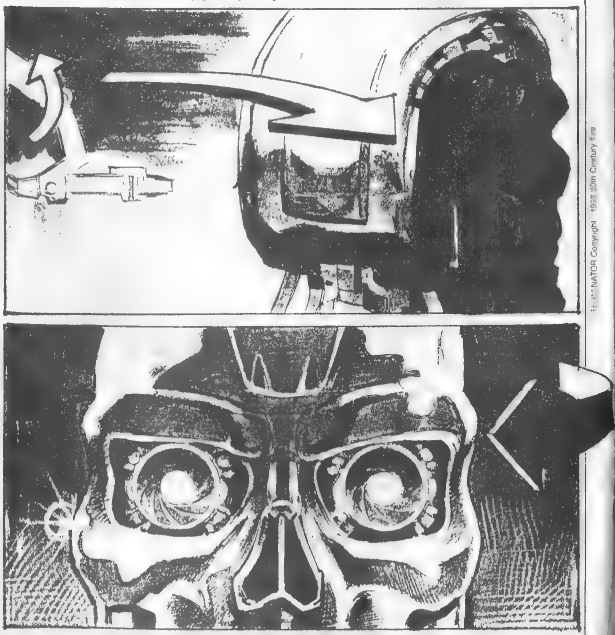
PAUL: *Too bad. There's not that communication between people?*

TIM: Well, they seem to be nice people and everything, but someone even said, "Boy, you think it's tough to get *in* here, try to get your paycheck." *(Laughter.)* I worked at Marvel Productions out here and it wasn't anywhere near as nasty as that. DC is a little more informal, and . . . **Mark Badger** had just got back from some trip — I had already talked to a few people that I knew there — Mark grabbed me by the arm and pulled me in to talk to *everybody*. Great guy.

PAUL: *He was familiar with your work, or you knew him before?*

TIM: I think he was familiar with my work, I never met him before. Just *zoom!* And it was so weird because I got the job from **Mark Waid** for SECRET ORIGINS. "You know what you would be good for, DINOSAUR ISLAND." And the guy that was right there, this English guy **James Robinson,** turns out he got the assignment to write the sucker, and we ended up doing a real nice job. Then they cancelled the book and now it's an

Here and next two pages, storyboard panels from the trailer for **TERMINATOR II**.



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the book, so it's an inventory story. It may never get seen."

inventory story, it may never get seen. It may eventually get seen, but so far no one's inked it, it's sitting in a drawer. That's really tough, you know.

PAUL: *Well, do you think that because that story wasn't published that no one else got to see you in the mainstream? Is that a problem?*

TIM: Yeah. See, the thing is, the problem with working for these companies is you have to build up a certain momentum and keep it up. If you move out of the mainstream at all then you don't get assignments, especially on the west coast.

PAUL: *No matter what they say at the conventions?*

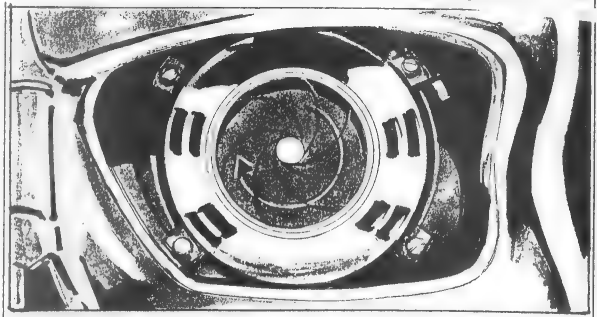
TIM: Everybody is being on their best behavior, being polite, and a lot of times they just don't say a word of truth; or they say things that they *intend* to do but just the day to day grind pulls it out of their heads. That's why a lot of things get discussed at conventions but very little actual business gets done.

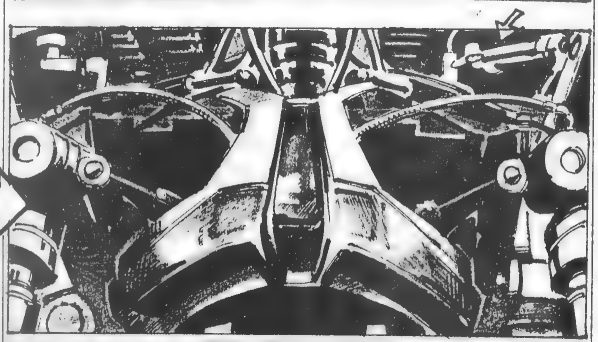
PAUL: *So did you go to Marvel with the intention of inking or pencilling?*

TIM: Well, I actually went in there for an interview with **Carol Kalish** to work on the book OPEN SPACE because I hadn't done anything in a strict science fiction mode in a long time. I would have liked to have gone ahead and done something like that. I *like* working in different genres.

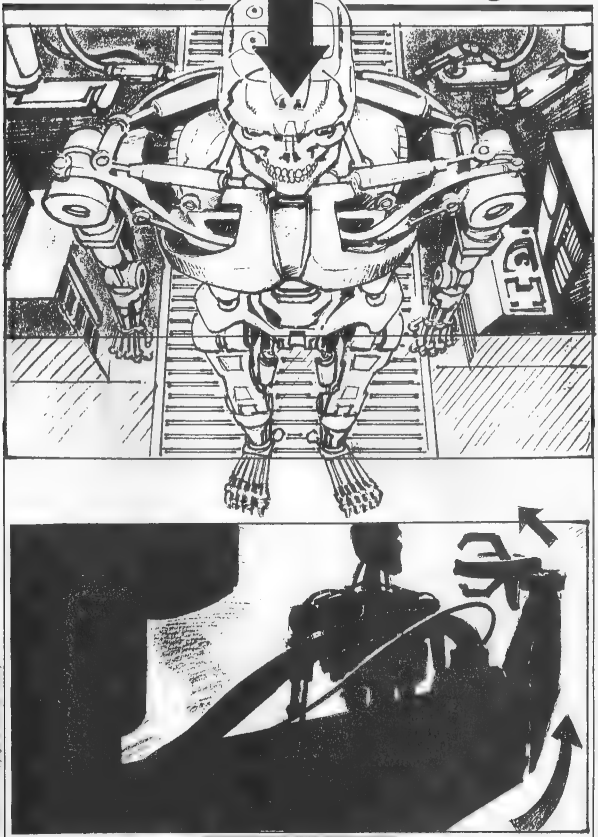
PAUL: *If you were at Marvel I'd like to see you do THE HULK.*

TIM: Oh, God, there's certain characters that if they wanted to let me play with them I would go ahead and I would have





"I like working in v[illegible]us different genres."



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"I only have so much time no[illegible]rk in comics."

fun with it. Basically, some of these characters, especially when their anatomy is a big part of it, I can get into it because figure drawing is my passion. But my own problem, to really enjoy it I have to have something to say about the plotline. When I work with Dennis I always suggest dialogue, and a lot of the times he uses it because it works. I do this in storyboard animation, I include pickup lines and things like that.

PAUL: *Do they use them?*

TIM: A lot of the times they do. I do that all the time with the comedy stuff I do. I've worked on THE SIMPSONS, I've worked with **Matt Groening** on things, and —

PAUL: *How was it working with him?*

TIM: He really has a hands-on approach. People thought he just created it and walked away, but this guy is right *there!* And he liked what I was doing, he enjoyed some of the sight gags I would throw in. He had ideas, you know, where he wanted changes and stuff. He knows those characters so those were strips that were actually *funny* to read. It's not stuff that had to be saved. That's a pure joy. When they *let* you go ahead — the people above you — and do the right thing, do the thing that you *know* is right —

PAUL: *It's that they have* faith *in you.*

TIM: And they don't start dicking it around. If you can be creative with something — I think **Neal Adams** even said . . . I won't quote him because I don't know what the quote is exactly, but any character can be made interesting, it's just how it's handled.

PAUL: *Interpretation.*

TIM: Anyway, if I went in and I got something from them — I mean Marvel, any company — it would be to work with a particular person or work on a particular character. They would be happy to let people work on characters *but* it's got to be their way, so your creativity is kind of dampened down a bit. When you get the opportunity to be creative with something, you can handle it in whatever style you want, that's great!

PAUL: *You're talking about freedom.*

TIM: These days my attitude is if I'm going to put in all the work it takes to do a real great job then maybe I should be doing that with something of my own, because I only have so much time now to work in comics. But if I'm just going to be doing some comic work, you know — I have to *see* something down the road. That's why FLARE was so great, because I got to design the way the character looked, and I got to have a big say in how the story went and what kind of story was being told, and developed the character away from the group type thing. I was *excited* about it!

A self portrait included in character designs for the RAMBO cartoon show.

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WRITER/EDITOR

"There is a fandom beginning in Mexico."

RÉMY BASTIEN

Popocatepétl and Ixtaccíhuatl are twin-capped volcanos, affectionately known as Popo and the White Lady, rising over 17,000 feet and lying southeast of Mexico City.

In 1325 a branch of the Aztec tribe wandered into this valley and beheld an eagle, perched on a cactus, devouring a snake. They took this as a sign from the gods, and built their city on the spot. They called it Tenochtitlán.

The Aztec built their temple where the eagle appeared, and this is now the site of Mexico City's zócalo (town square).

It took Hernán Cortéz in 1519 to overthrow the powerful Aztec race, and the Spanish ruled for three centuries.

Today, it is these cultural, religious and ethnological distinctions left by conquerer and conquered alike that create the culture of a huge population known to the world as Mexicans.

To entertain, amuse and bring home the sales from such a population requires a careful combination of knowledge, intuition and experience. Through his editorial directorship, Rémy Bastien van der Meer has achieved just that, and among the Mexican bestsellers in the comics field are some of the home-grown Estados Unidos de America (USA) Marvel variety.

In parts one and two of this interview, Rémy Bastien gave us the lowdown on Mexican comics — together with his background in the field. Here, in the third and final part, Rémy reveals how his involvement with Marvel has shaped his career . . .

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"I was fascinated by the way Stan Lee and Jack

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT: *You're in a sort of curious position. You said much of your background and interest is in the cultural comic books, and yet you're also the editor of the Mexican Marvel books.*

RÉMY BASTIEN: Right. SPIDER-MAN best resisted the crisis. When the crisis started in '82 we had to close AVENGERS, DAREDEVIL, SPIDER-WOMAN, FANTASTIC FOUR, and we had to close Hanna-Barbera's TOP CAT and THE FLINTSTONES. They were all near or very near the breakeven point and with the increase in the value of the U.S. dollar they just went under. Now we've been working up again, and we're having good results with THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN, which unfortunately we're not publishing in its U.S. size — but we're still larger than the Turkish edition, which is the mini-digest size. Marvel has had to make some concessions on occasion to keep the magazines on the market, but I think there is a margin for more U.S. publications in Mexico. But it has to be a cautious approach.

DAK: *If the comic books that are selling a lot are Mexican made, then why would a publisher pay a licensing fee and publish these books rather than just. publish Mexican-made comics?*

RÉMY: The licensed products are good, and definitely there is a market for them — maybe not so much in the rural areas, but it exists in the big cities. There is a public that *prefers* SPIDER-MAN to the genre comics. In the middle class the kids prefer U.S. products whether it's comic books or rock'n'roll or TV programs or movies, to the made-in-Mexico

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From Rémy's childhood. Above: SPIROU and below: TINTIN, with Snowy, his dog.

stuff which is more oriented to the working class. So, there is a market for licensed product, be it from Japan or Spain or the U.S., though the market has contracted, it's not as large as it was before. And there are several companies licensing U.S. characters and/or the original materials from the States.

DAK: *Were you familiar with the Marvel material before you became the editor?*

RÉMY: Yeah, definitely.

DAK: *I wondered how you could make sense of it, because it's got 25 or 50 years of continuity and all.*

RÉMY: *(Laughter.)* Well, I have the same old story that anybody who's been in comics for more than 20 years has —which is, if I had all my original Marvel issues, I could buy myself a yacht. I've always read comics. I started off reading the Dell comic books translated in Spanish when I was six or seven, and also the American editions. Then I went to live in Europe where I read TINTIN and SPIROU and all the European hardcover comic books. Then I continued with what was being published by Dell and DC throughout my early teenage years. And when I got back to Mexico, Marvel started! I was still a teenager, and like many people in the industry I was *fascinated* by the way **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** created these superheroes with a human side. Spider-Man had to come home and sew his suit, and his Aunt May would tell him to drink his warm milk and have his cookies before he went to sleep — this was something which we had never seen. Many people dropped everything else and just concentrated on reading Marvel comics. Then, of course, I went on to other things in college, and I almost stopped reading comics for a while.

DAK: *Were these the U.S. editions?*

RÉMY: The original U.S. editions.

DAK: *They were sold in Mexico?*

RÉMY: They were sold in Mexico City in convenience stores and supermarkets, and I had all of the originals up to issues #50 or #60 of THOR, SPIDER-MAN, IRON MAN, FANTASTIC FOUR, THE AVENGERS — and they would be worth a pretty penny now. I read them in the Spanish versions, so when I got to Novedades and I was offered the editorship of the Marvel line, I was *ready* for them. I had read all of the early stories before, I remembered them, and I was able to translate and direct the translators that later helped me. I think

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Kirby created superheroes with a human side."

Marvel is pretty satisfied with the work we've done, and actually we did it pretty fast. I had the Marvel line of comic books ready for sale in two months, the first titles, which were FANTASTIC FOUR, SPIDER-MAN, DAREDEVIL. Also a composite umbrella title in which we published TWO-GUN KID, THE RAWHIDE KID and some others — which did not work in Mexico.

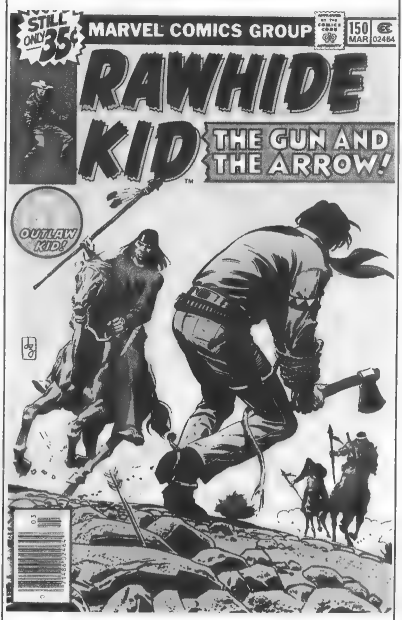
Back then I told my bosses that this would not sell. They were under the impression that since this was cowboy material it would sell fantastically — like our own made-in-Mexico cowboy title. I mentioned to them that the made-in-Mexico cowboy title, EL LIBRO VAQUERO, was made in Mexico, *for* Mexicans, *by* Mexicans, and was *oriented* to the adults and teenagers. Well, the Marvel cowboy books were pretty dated material — well written for their time and the artists were great — but it was very elementary Western fare. It was a disaster, it just did not sell. We even added on all the football team decals as a promotion and that didn't help either. And **Gail Munn** from Marvel, who handled International Licensing, also told me, "Rémy, why do you want to publish THE RAWHIDE KID when you've got all these superhero titles?" I said, "Gail, these are orders from above, from the powers that be." And later on she said, "I told you so." *(Laughter.)*

So, THE RAWHIDE KID did not do well in Mexico, and this was his second time around. By the way, this is the third time around for Marvel products. They were published previously by another publisher, some titles by a company called Novaro, which went bankrupt. They were the *biggest* publishers in Latin America of comic books but apparently, through bad administration — not because of lack of sales — they went bankrupt. Then Marvel was published by another company who was doing *such* a bad job that Marvel cancelled their option, their contract. And then they offered it to Novedades, which is where I went to work full time after being a freelancer for a few years.

Let me tell you some strange anecdotes about SPIDER-MAN in Mexico. About eight years ago, one day I picked up an evening newspaper and I read a headline on the first page that said something like "Kid Dies Thinking He Is Spider-Man." What happened was that a kid was left alone at home, an 8-year-old, I believe. His mother went out shopping. When the mother got home she found her son dead; apparently, he had strangled himself with the venetian blind cord, jumping off a double decker bed. During the ensuing investigation the mother declared that her son was always pretending to be Spider-Man and that surely that had been the cause of the accident. The reporter, by the way, did comment that the mother should never have left the kid alone at home. Anyway, it was tragic, it was awful.

So I had a meeting with Novedades' legal department, to get ready for any flak that might come our way. Nothing really happened, though over the years I've gotten countless calls from kids who wanted to talk to Spider-Man or Peter Parker; I had also talked about this with the legal department, and they had agreed with me that we were not to encourage the idea that Spider-Man was real, when children called the office. Once, I got a call from a mother who requested *I* pretend to be Spider-Man or Peter Parker, for the benefit of her six- or

The Rawhide Kid died south of the border.



RÉMY BASTIEN

"To keep Spider-Man in line I had to go

seven-year-old. I ended up having a real argument with her over the phone, telling her of the potential dangers of stimulating this kind of fantasy in kids, and finally she hung up on me.

Another time, a most persistent little kid insisted I put him through to the Web Slinger. I took it slowly, pointing out that we were dealing with a character that only existed in drawings and TV cartoons. But no, he insisted, Spider-Man was real. The thing is he'd seen that old live-action SPIDER-MAN film and there was no way to make him understand he was a fantasy figure. Finally, the brat yelled at me that I was an outright liar, just like his parents and brothers! Boy . . .

A very strange coincidence is that, in that very same week in which the newspaper informed of the "Kid Dies Thinking He Is Spider-Man," there was also a death of another kid who allegedly jumped off the roof thinking he was Superman, also a first-page news item. Two cases in one week. After that, thankfully, there have been no similar incidents, at least not to my knowledge.

DAK: *And you told me that at one point you went to New York to meet with that well-known scoundrel Jim Salicrup to work out the continuity, because now there are multiple SPIDER-MAN titles with continuity among them.*

RÉMY: Exactly. At the beginning it was easy for me because we started off in sequence, FANTASTIC FOUR #1, SPIDER-MAN #1 and so forth. The continuity was reasonable, the amount of crossovers and references between one title and another was also reasonable. But back in 1987 it got to the point where I didn't exactly know what was happening and I was having a hard time keeping the comic books in line. We have one SPIDER-MAN title and we're publishing all three Marvel titles in there — AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, WEB OF SPIDER-MAN, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN. To keep those things in line I definitely had to go to New York to talk to **Jim Salicrup** and I brought back about three feet of paper taped together in which he mapped out the progress for me.

It's hard even if you have the issues ahead of time to figure it out, and then they cross over into *other* titles — and then this new fad in the States with the multiple crossovers and the universe reworkings makes things *really* hard. The people at Marvel have, really, very little idea of what it takes for foreign licensees to keep up with the crossovers. And **Jim Salicrup's** map ran out awhile ago — so I hope I'll be able to travel up there and see him again! *(Laughter.)* You know, we go from WEB OF SPIDER-MAN to the wedding and then to two issues in SPECTACULAR and then you have to jump over here and so forth.

DAK: *And now you'll have the new SPIDER-MAN by Todd McFarlane.*

RÉMY: It will also be published here in Mexico and we're doing our best to keep the continuity. Since our SPIDER-MAN title publishes two U.S. stories per issue we have to make explanations and put in special notes explaining that this adventure will conclude two issues from here while we're finishing off with this other that started somewhere else, and we have to do little synopses of what goes on in other Marvel titles, to make SPIDER-MAN comprehensible to each reader.

DAK: *And the readers have stayed with you through this?*

RÉMY: The readers have stayed with us. And speaking of fandom in Mexico, which we mentioned a while back, it's beginning to grow. I recently opened a section in all of the Marvel titles we have where we answer questions from the fans, and we're starting to get a lot of mail.

DAK: *I think that's a good idea.*

RÉMY: A lot, maybe 15 or 20 letters a month, and in vacation time it goes up to 100 letters a month. And we get letters from the same person once he sees his answer, and slowly I think we're satisfying all of the questions that the Marvel readers have. There is a fandom beginning in Mexico. There is a little association called The Friends of Comic Books, they even have their own lapel pin and their ID cards, and they have meetings every Monday. Fanzines are starting, and there have been delegations of Mexican fans at the San Diego comics conventions. So fandom is slowly on its way.

It's curious, though, that most of what I perceive as the nascent fans in Mexico are mostly middle-class readers who are very enthusiastic about foreign products. They are not very enthusiastic about, they don't read and criticize Mexican comics. So this is like an offshoot of American culture forming in Mexico.

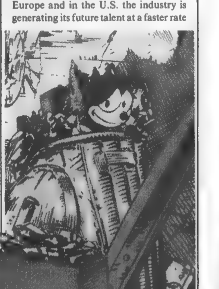
DAK: *Are there Mexican superheroes?*

RÉMY: There are. There are not superheroes in the traditional American sense, but there are several. The oldest equivalent of the U.S. superhero in Mexico is **El Santo, The Saint,** who was a very famous, *extremely* popular wrestler. Your regular wrestler in the **Hulk Hogan** mode, he was extremely popular in comic books, film and radio back in the '50s. He would deal with everything from aliens from outer space to corruption in the boxing world to Atlantis under the sea. He would just go from wrestling to science fiction to the supernatural, and he was what we could term a superhero.

We had many Mexican *charros,* the Mexican cowboy heroes, who would also venture into the supernatural and fight aliens from outer space, kind of combine cowboys with science fiction. In more recent times, the top superhero character is called Kaliman, which is *Kali,* the Hindu goddess, and *man.* Kaliman is a kind of universal character who has supernatural powers acquired through Eastern mystic forces. He deals with everything from intrigue, monsters, vampires — he's more like a pulp hero, like a '40s serial adventure character. He would be a Mexican superhero.

DAK: *You're very well informed about comics in the United States and in Europe and so on. Are your contemporaries at the other comics companies also looking at what goes on outside Mexico?*

RÉMY: In general, yes. Unfortunately, in the Mexican industry . . . there is a limit to the amount of professionals in the field, and there are *not* enough professionals coming into the comics field as fast as the field needs them. In Europe and in the U.S. the industry is generating its future talent at a faster rate



One of the first McFarlane covers published in Mexico.

to New York to talk to Jim Salicrup."

than in Mexico. But, obviously, *in* the industry it's a small world.

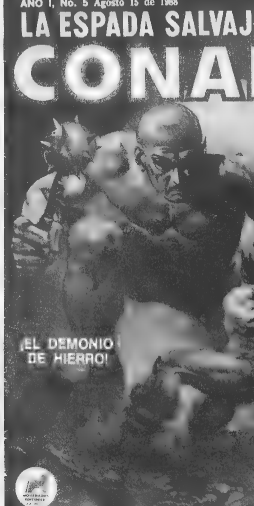
DAK: *You have to give those people writing those letters —*

RÉMY: Chances. Basically, the influence of foreign comics is mostly seen in the artwork. Since the literary and narrative structure of Mexican scripts is quite different, the main influence is in the artwork. What is *most* admired about foreign comic books by the professionals in Mexico is the artwork.

DAK: *I think that's true the world over, that's what sells the comics. Is there anything we haven't talked about that you would like to get into here?*

RÉMY: There's something important, something I think that applies to comic books all over the world. Recently, the very first in-depth history of Mexican comic books was published and one of the writers, there are two of them, was asked on an important TV show — because there is a general idea that comics in Mexico are unsavory products, which is not really true — "Is a country what it reads?" Of course, the question was kind of *rigged*, because if a country is what it reads then *are* we these comic books which are on the stands,

"Reading Stan Lee titles of the '60s was like hearing



CONAN — the Latin Barbarian!

some very virtuous and very good products and also a lot of trash? And this, co-author, a sociologist, **Armando Barbu**, said, "We are not *what* we read, we are *how* we read." I think this applies to the whole world. Obviously, if you read a superhero comic and you believe it all then you have a problem. It's not *what* you read, it's *how* you read it, how you perceive what you read. This is important for everyone who reads comics everywhere in the world. It's how you read it, how you absorb it.

DAK: *I think that's also important when reading the newspapers, listening to the radio, watching TV.*

RÉMY: It goes through the whole spectrum.

DAK: *I've heard it said that older people who grew up without reading comic books, it's difficult for them to read them. Just as you learn to read a book left to right and top to bottom, there's a way to read comics, and if you read comics as a kid you don't even realize that you're doing it. It seems to be, perhaps, something that you pick up at a certain age, and if you don't it's harder for you to get later.*

RÉMY: Good comic books — like good movies — have to be seamless, and the act of *reading* a comic book must also be seamless. For that you have to master the technique of reading them. It's like listening to music and being able to separate the bass drum from the snare drum, the guitar from the bass guitar, the piano from the violin, and also listen to it as a whole. That also applies to comic books. And then there are different levels of technique. In Europe you will have comic books with no captions, in which the artwork is so well thought-out that the artwork will tell you what is happening, where in other comic books it will be the text which tells you: "Later, driving in his car . . ." *(Laughter.)* So there are many ways to approach comic books.

JULIA R. MATHER: *I think, from what I've seen, good writers of comic books sometimes have a bad artist to tell the story, and sometimes good art is destroyed by 47 balloons on the page.*

RÉMY: There is also a factor which might apply in comics — I know it applies in soap opera — the person watching, the spectator, knows what is happening in each of the character's minds. The spectator is the *only* one that knows what is happening in the overall story. So it's an intimate world in which the spectator has control, so to put it, of what is happening. In our daily lives we don't know who is getting ready with the knife to stab you in the back. In a soap opera, the spectator is the only one who knows that this deceit is going on. The characters themselves do not have the whole story together.

JULIA: *They're just living through it bit by bit.*

DAK: *One of Jim Salicrup's pet peeves is when the characters in a comic book exclaim, "I should have known!"* (Laughter.) *For a while I was editing SPIDEY SUPER STORIES for the Children's Television Workshop, and that was a very, very simplified SPIDER-MAN book with very limited vocabulary for kids with reading problems — I'm sure you don't print this one in Mexico.*

RÉMY: No.

DAK: *The intent was to use comics which were colorful and something they might* want *to read to teach them literacy. They had very specific word lists of what is the vocabulary level of someone at this age or with these problems.*

RÉMY: Right.

DAK: *What they did was interesting, they had a machine which actually tracked how these kids read comics, their eye tracks.*

RÉMY: Oh!

DAK: *And they printed out just black line art, drawings of the page with the eye tracks printed on them.*

'Satisfaction' by The Rolling Stones for the first time."

RÉMY: Overlaid that on the comic?

DAK: *Yeah. You could see, first, they did not read the captions. They would read what the characters said but not the captions. And sometimes, if it was hard or just to much copy, you would see that they read one or two words and then they'd look at Spider-Man, then they would look at the villain, and then they would glance back up at the caption, "no, that's boring," and go on. It was interesting to see how they actually read the comics.*

RÉMY: I wonder if that kind of study has been applied in the mainstream?

DAK: *Not that I know of. Only Children's Television Workshop has, probably, the time, interest and funding to do that sort of thing.*

RÉMY: Research. That's really interesting testing.

DAK: *They had rules of thumb, they didn't want more than three speech balloons in each panel and they had to be very clearly meant to be read in a specific order, placed so that you couldn't really confuse the order in which you were to read them. It was a basic grounding in comic books. You can get very fancy, you can do WATCHMEN, but under it all there are these simple principles.*

RÉMY: Simple principles of storytelling. You have to start out with a conflict, then explain how the characters got into the conflict, and when you reach the middle of the story all of the players must be playing and we're headed toward the resolution of the conflict.

JULIA: *I was watching a program on the Disney Channel, and a man who as a child knew Walt Disney, was a friend of his father, said that when Walt was very excited about a project he would go to children and tell them all about it. And he said that Walt Disney as a storyteller was a hypnotist. He would keep them with their mouths open and their eyes popping out for half an hour, and they always wanted more. He believed that that was what made Walt Disney great, he had the gift of really being able to tell a story, of entertaining you.*

RÉMY: Sometimes I tell new script writers who are coming on board that what comics is about is storytelling, and what they have to do is to think back to the cavemen when the old guy who was too old to go out on the hunt would hear about everything that happened from the hunters and then at night *he* would tell the story. That's what it's about, all entertainment, telling the story in a way to get the people interested. Sometimes people forget this. Actually, the approach is simple, tell a story and get the people hooked and keep them hooked for as long as possible.

DAK: *Stan Lee was good at that.*

RÉMY: Very good. Reading the first **Stan Lee** titles of the Sixties was like hearing "Satisfaction" by **The Rolling Stones** for the first time. Something totally new.

DAK: *He was very good in person at that, also. They still tell tales at Marvel of him jumping up on desks and carrying on to the artists, explaining what was going on.*

RÉMY: Acting out the story.

DAK: *I think it takes that. And you're right, people do forget, or if they're new they don't necessarily know. One time I wrote a story that had no antagonist, and I just had so much trouble, worked and worked on it! Then I went to one of the editors at Marvel and he said, "Where's the villain?"* (Laughter.) *And the second he said it I knew, "Ah,* that's *it!"*

RÉMY: Right, antagonist, protagonist, secondary characters — we have certain rules for scriptwriting, very elementary rules. Start off with a conflict and then explain how the characters got into conflict, and then carry it on from there to the resolution. And if possible give it an unexpected twist at the end, like the good guy turns out to be bad and the bad guy turns out to be good. Once, I don't

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"A comic book by itself is just paper."

remember where, I saw a tip for aspiring writers: "If you can't think of a story, write a story about this: A good man turns bad, a bad man turns good, and somewhere along the line their paths cross." You can apply that to the cowboy era, to a space opera, to *anything*. That's a story in a nutshell.

DAK: *When I was aspiring to become a professional writer myself, I got a lot of advice from an old-time writer for the pulp magazines and for paperbacks, E. Hoffmann Price. He made me aware of a book by a Frenchman, Georges Polti, called I think 36 DRAMATIC SITUATIONS. That book has the 36 plots that there are on the planet Earth, and they are everything. Maybe you could say there's one he forgot —*

RÉMY: Or a variation.

DAK: *— but they're all either a combination or a variation of those basic situations, and they apply to anything; they are the basic conflicts that there are. But character has so much to do with it, what you do with your characters and so on, the life you bring to it, though there's not that many plots themselves.*

RÉMY: There's not that much new under the sun. A lot of stories are just old stories, like from THE BIBLE. The story of Joseph being sold off by his brothers and then he comes back, you see that story of betrayal everywhere. A lot of Mexican writers take stories from THE BIBLE and redo them in modern settings. One romantic writer used to take rides in the subway, from station to station all across town, and she would just catch little pieces of conversation and make stories from that. Those were best-sellers because they were taken directly from the experiences of the people who were riding the subway and reading the stories that she was writing.

DAK: *Are you familiar with the work of Harvey Pekar?*

RÉMY: No.

DAK: *He does a comic called AMERICAN SPLENDOR, and he's probably more well known for his guest appearances on LATE NIGHT WITH DAVID LETTERMAN —*

RÉMY: I've heard of him, but I'm not familiar with his work.

DAK: *He records conversations and then he collaborates with various artists to draw them. It's all snatches of conversation and events that have occurred. It's an interesting technique. You have to have the right ear for it, though.*

RÉMY: And the ear for the reader. There's one thing about the way you read comics . . . I think a comic is more than the sum of its parts. A comic by itself is just paper. The comic comes alive when a person *reads* it. I believe that the *real* way to read comic books is the way we used to read them sometimes when we were teenagers, at midnight under the covers with a flashlight, in absolute silence, in total intimacy, with no interruptions. The reader plays with time.

I've had new editors coming on board and they will see a panel in which the characters are kissing but they also have word balloons, so this new editor will tell me, "They can't kiss and talk at the same time." I say, "Look, the comic book is *flowing* in time, so what they're saying here obviously is what they said just before they kissed, or what they're saying just as their lips are separating." The true flow of comic-book action happens in the reader's mind, and according to the reader's preparation and imagination he will contribute to the comic and make it come more or less alive. In a "trained" reader's mind, the comic book becomes a movie!

VAQUERO, one of Mexico's popular westerns, led to the mistaken idea that Marvel's westerns would be popular, and thus brought the Rawhide Kid south of the border.

JULIA: *It's more of a stimulus for imagination than just feeding information.*

RÉMY: It's like a spark which you turn into a flame.

NOTE: This interview took place last year in Mexico City. At the time, Rémy Bastien was editor at Novedades. Just as this issue of COMICS INTERVIEW was headed for the printer, we got a call from Rémy, who informed us he had resigned his editor's post. "After ten years, I felt it was time for a change," said Rémy over the phone. "I'll miss working on the cultural comics I created and I'll miss SPIDER-MAN and getting those weird calendars that Jim Salicrup sent me by mail. I parted with the company on most amicable terms and for now I'll be working on several personal projects and I'll be freelancing. I might return to editing on a full-time basis sometime in the future; I've received diverse offers from the publishing industry and I'm too young to set up my pig farm yet."

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LAST WORD

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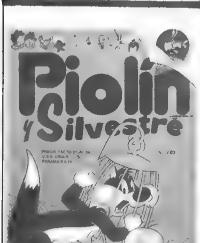

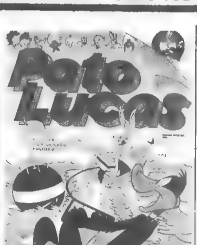

THE LAST BASTION?
(OR: NEW BEGINNINGS)

Dear Juha:

I've been out of touch since I spent considerable time out of Mexico City during the last months of the past year. However, I am finally formally installed at Publicaciones Continentales de México as director of the Comic Books Division. This company now publishes three comic titles created in Chile, with a talking bird character called "Condorito" ("Little Condor"), and has just launched four comics with Warner Bros. titles (Porky, Bugs, Tweety and S. and Daffy Duck). These magazines, as of now, are still not under my direction. The Comics Division proper starts with yours truly, and we are working on some "Made in Mexico" projects in the standard "digest" size so popular here.

I have only just begun work here (until today I didn't even have a secretary) and am barely starting to get a feeling for the company, which is part of one of the largest publishing corporations in Latin America, with its own national and continental distribution system, Intermex. Among the 55-plus publications now generated by the corporation are TV GUIDE, HARPER'S BAZAAR, POPULAR MECHANICS, PC MAGAZINE and so on, to cowboy prose pockets, Barbara Cartland books and Harlequins. Intermex also distributes publications from the U.S., like NEWSWEEK; from Spain and elsewhere.

I thank you for your thoughts and good wishes. As they say in the USA, I am now in a "whole new ball game," and I trust the future will be very interesting. Please convey my very best regards to David.

Rémy Bastien
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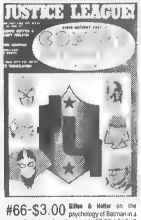

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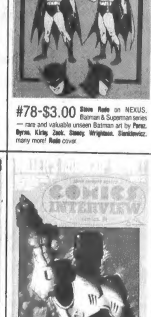

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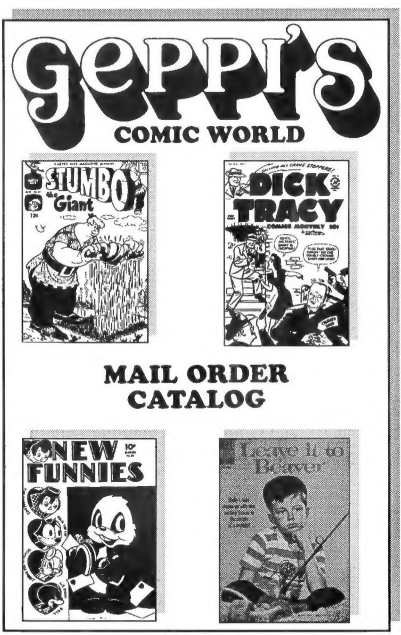

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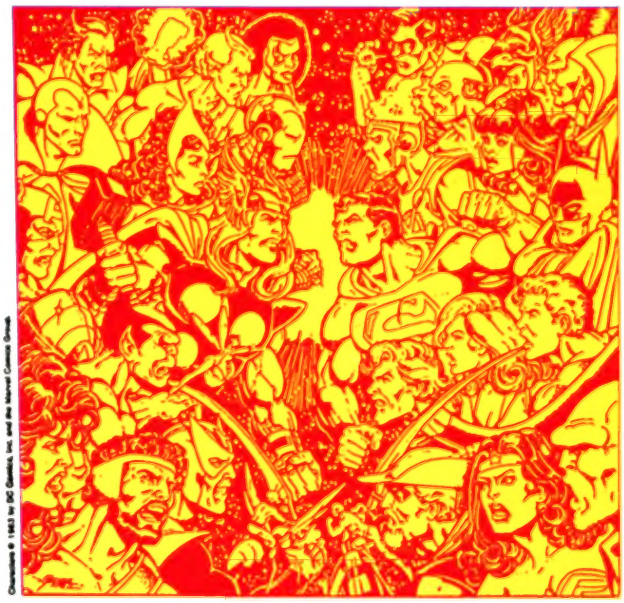

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